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# U.S. Is Said To Have Made Hostage Offer

## Plan Called for Parts to Iran, \$2 Million Ransom, Swap Of Prisoners, Sources Say

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WASHINGTON—The Reagan administration tried to win the freedom of an Israeli soldier and the American hostages in Lebanon last May by offering a swap of some 300 Lebanese Shiite prisoners, a \$2 million ransom and a sale of military spare parts to Iran, sources said.

The deal collapsed when pro-Iranian militiamen in Lebanon refused to release the kidnapped Israeli soldier, the sources said yesterday.

Israeli officials then balked at releasing the Shiite captives, who were held by an Israeli ally in southern Lebanon. The ransom, to be delivered at sea off Cyprus, was never picked up, but the Iranians did claim the spare parts, administration sources said.

The complex arrangement suggests that the administration's efforts to free the hostages in Lebanon weren't confined to selling arms to Iran. It also indicates that some of the efforts directly contradicted Mr. Reagan's oft-stated policy of not negotiating with terrorists, not paying ransom for hostages, and pressuring other governments to follow suit.

Some elements of the plan have been disclosed over the past few weeks. But it wasn't apparent that the delivery of arms to Iran last May and a Reagan administration request to Texas billionaire H. Ross Perot for ransom money were part of a large, concerted effort to free the hostages.

### 'No One Knew of It'

Asked about the plan yesterday, White House spokesman Daniel Howard said: "If it happened, according to the National Security Council, no one knew of it, and it certainly was not authorized."

State Department spokesman Charles Redman said the failed plan contradicted U.S. policy, and added: "The United States strongly urges American companies and private citizens not to pay terrorists' ransom demands."

A spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington yesterday declined to comment, saying it was too late in the day to reach officials in Israel for a response.

Some administration officials yesterday claimed that the aborted plan didn't violate U.S. policy because the money was provided by a private citizen, the arms were intended mostly to open channels to moderates in the Iranian government, and the Shiite prisoners were to be released in exchange for the captured Israeli.

According to sources involved in the operation, the plan was worked out by Lt. Col. Oliver North, then a member of the National Security Council staff, with Israeli and Iranian officials. Under the plan, the pro-Iranian forces in Lebanon would release the four Americans and the Israeli at the same time Col. Antoine Lahad's Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army released the Shiites.

Simultaneously, the sources said, representatives of a pro-Iranian terrorist group in Lebanon were to pick up \$2 million in cash provided by Mr. Perot, and the U.S. was to deliver a payload of spare parts for Hawk anti-aircraft missiles and other weapons to Iran. The plane also carried former national security adviser Robert McFarlane and Col. North, who expected to meet top Iranian officials in Tehran.

### Equipment Unloaded; No Hostages

Mr. McFarlane and Col. North flew to Iran from Israel May 28 on a plane loaded with cardboard boxes containing spare parts for the Iranian military. They believed the hostages would be free by the time they arrived in Tehran. But after they arrived, the Iranians unloaded the equipment and Mr. McFarlane called then-national security adviser John Poindexter and discovered no hostages had been freed.

Mr. McFarlane left the White House last December. Col. North was dismissed from his national security post last week and Adm. Poindexter stepped down at the same time.

Administration officials said the plan also called for Terry Waite, a lay representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury, to provide "cover" for the deal. Mr. Waite was to call on Col. Lahad, a Maronite Christian, with letters from Pope John Paul II and from Robert Runcie, the Archbishop of Canterbury, seeking the release of the Shiite captives on humanitarian and religious grounds.

Israeli officials had approved the release, informed sources said. Iranian officials promised Col. North that the American hostages and the Israeli soldier would be freed once Col. Lahad announced he would grant the two prelates' humanitarian request and the ransom and spare parts were delivered.

Some U.S. intelligence sources say the Iranians who arranged the deal had believed Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini was near death last spring, and these sources believe the deal may have collapsed when he suddenly recovered.

On several occasions, most recently last May, the Washington Post reported yesterday, Col. North asked Mr. Perot, the Texas billionaire, for ransom money to free the hostages.

### Perot Provided Cash

Mr. Perot said in an interview yesterday that he gave \$2 million in cash to an employee who carried it to Cyprus in a suitcase. No one showed up to claim the money, Mr. Perot said. He also said the U.S. government has asked him for similar ransom money to win the release of hostages "on countless occasions" since 1969.

The sources said the failed plan was based partly on the administration's successful effort to free 39 hostages from a Trans World Airlines jetliner that was hijacked to Beirut in June 1985. Four of the Americans were held by the Hezbollah, or Party of God, the same group that now holds Americans hostage in Lebanon.

The TWA hostages were freed after Israel agreed to release some 735 Lebanese prisoners, most of them Shiites that it had seized during the 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

At the time, both Israeli and U.S. officials asserted that the American hostages had been freed unconditionally. They claimed that that no deal had been made linking the Americans' freedom to the phased release of Israel's Lebanese prisoners.

President Reagan thanked Syrian President Hafez Assad for his role in freeing the hostages. But informed sources said the four Americans held by the Hezbollah were released only after Hojatolislam Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the speaker of the Iranian parliament, intervened on their behalf.

Administration officials have said President Reagan approved U.S. arms sales to Iran last January in part to open channels to Mr. Rafsanjani and other presumed moderates in Tehran.

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